

Sarpy County Attorney Handbook

L. Kenneth Polikov, Sarpy County Attorney

POLICIES and PROCEDURES

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Purpose/Mission Statement

Welcome, to the Sarpy County Attorney's Office. The purpose of this handbook is to convey the basic principles of conduct expected of all employees of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office in order to provide the most efficient and highest degree of quality services to citizens and taxpayers while safeguarding the reputation of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office and its employees. This handbook is general in nature and not intended to be all inclusive.

Always remember that our Mission Statement is as follows:

*We administer, advocate and apply the law to seek
justice and protect the interest of our community.*

About the Sarpy County Attorney

Lee Polikov was appointed in December 1999 to finish a vacated three year term of office and has been elected three times. He has served as President of the Nebraska County Attorneys Association and now serves as the Vice President of the National District Attorneys Association.

A Note from Lee:

“From the newest staff person to the most senior DCA, there is a shared professional responsibility that is of the highest order. The decision-making responsibilities and opportunities are sometimes daunting. But the challenge to seek justice, while protecting the rights of the innocent and recognizing the rights of the accused provides for a special satisfaction that is not easily found in other disciplines of the practice of law.

Every employee is part of a critical team that directly and significantly impacts other peoples’ lives. The lawyer in the courtroom or before an administrative board cannot function as an individual to serve justice. Whether criminal or civil, it takes a committed and professional effort from a team to represent the interests of the community. The policies and procedures outlined here represent the basics needed to deliver the best representation possible.”

About the Chief Deputy Attorney

Tricia Freeman joined the Sarpy County Attorney’s Office in 1994 as a law clerk, began as a Deputy County Attorney in 1996, and became the Chief Deputy County Attorney in 1999. She is currently the chair of the Nebraska State Bar Commission and a member of both the Board of Directors of the Nebraska County Attorneys Association and the House of Delegates for the Nebraska State Bar Association.

Introduction and Code of Conduct

A high standard of ethical business conduct is the responsibility of each individual employee. The reputation of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office depends on the way we conduct business and the way the public perceives that conduct. Employees are expected to apply the following principles of behavior when conducting business duties with and for the Sarpy County Attorney's Office:

1. **Loyalty.** No employee should be, or appear to be, subject to influences, interests or relationships which conflict with the best interests of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office.
2. **Observance of Moral and Ethical Standards.** In the conduct of business, each employee is expected to adhere to and comply with sound moral and ethical standards. These include acting with honesty and integrity while making decisions in the best interest of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office.
3. **Trustworthy.** Employees should be open and honest with co-workers and address any issues directly and honestly. Employees should not undermine the credibility of others in the office by taking disputes or disagreements to those outside of the office.
4. **Respect.** Employees should understand that a vast majority of people with whom we come in contact are not familiar with the legal system and should provide assistance in a non-confrontive, non-demeaning way when working with the public and staff. Employees should treat everyone with respect, courtesy and compassion.
5. **Adherence to Applicable Laws.** Employees of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office are expected to obey and adhere to laws and regulations applicable to Nebraska State Statutes and County Board policies.
6. **Integrity of Records.** Accurate and reliable preparation and maintenance of documents and records is of critical importance to properly maintain and fulfill the financial, legal and reporting obligations of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office.
7. **Employee Responsibility.** Employees are responsible for safeguarding County assets and property under their control.

Office Policies

We strive to make the Sarpy County Attorney's Office a safe and pleasant place to work. The cooperation of all employees is necessary to accomplish this. This handbook has been prepared to provide both non-exempt and exempt, employees with a written summary of the personnel policies, regulations and standards of conduct of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office. Non-exempt employees are employees who, because of the type of duties performed, the usual level of decision making authority, and the method of hourly compensation, are subject to all Fair Labor Standards Act provisions including the payment of overtime. Exempt employees are employees who, because of their positional duties and responsibilities and level of decision making authority, are exempt from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The handbook should be read carefully and kept for future reference as employees are expected to understand and abide by these policies. The Sarpy County Attorney's Office enforces the following policies and any employee found engaging in any unacceptable behavior or not abiding by the policies set forth herein, will be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to: reprimand, suspension and dismissal.

The following policies are in affect and shall be followed:

Attendance Policy

Employees are hired to fulfill specific needs of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office. Employees are expected to perform their job as effectively and efficiently as possible. Part of executing that expectation is prompt and regular attendance.

Non-exempt employees are expected to be at their desk, ready to work, during the regularly scheduled hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. If an employee is unable to arrive at work on time, or must be absent for part of, or all of, a day, he or she should speak directly to his or her supervisor. Designated managers will provide the employee with details regarding acceptable methods to inform them of absences/tardies.

Exempt employees are expected to devote the number of hours necessary to complete their respective tasks, regardless of the number of hours required. Oftentimes that will require an exempt employee to come in early or work late as well as remain accessible after hours by phone and/or email. However, there is a general expectation that exempt employees will arrive at work by 8:30 a.m. and remain until 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. Tardies or absences should be addressed with a supervisor. Any absence from the office that exceeds four hours at a time should follow the process as set forth below.

Absences: Vacation/Sick and Early Departures/Floating Holiday/Tardies

All absences from the office must be requested on an "Absence from Office" form. A form is required to be completed by the employee and then provided to the employee's supervisor for approval. Upon review, the supervisor will approve or deny the request and return a copy to the employee for their record and retain the original. Every absence will be recorded on the appropriate Outlook calendar. Each supervisor and appropriate staff will have access to the calendar and will be aware of any upcoming absences. If an employee's promptness and/or attendance interferes with his or her working responsibilities, the Sarpy County Attorney or designated manager will take the appropriate action, including but not limited to: reprimand, suspension, and dismissal.

Please note: Vacation requests should be scheduled at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance. Time without pay will not be approved; however, if there is an unpredicted circumstance a request can be made and will be reviewed on an individual basis.

Hours Worked

This section is intended to set forth the normal workweek. Arrival time for non-exempt employees is 8:00 a.m. Employees should be here on time and ready to begin work promptly. Closing time for non-exempt employees is 4:45 p.m.; however, employees are paid until 5:00 p.m. If the work load requires an employee stay until 5:00 p.m., the employee will not be allowed to flex the additional fifteen (15) minutes.

Time Sheets-Pay Days

The Sarpy County Attorney's Office is required to keep accurate records of the time worked by non-exempt employees. Compensable time worked is defined as any time spent by an employee performing duties or assignments directly relating to employment with the Sarpy County Attorney's Office. All non-exempt employees are required to complete a payroll report card for each pay period.

Employees are paid bi-weekly on Fridays. Time sheets are to be completed and returned to designated manager at the end of each pay period. Time sheets will be compared to the appropriate Outlook calendar.

Lunch and Break Periods

Full-time, non-exempt, employees working an eight (8) hour shift shall receive a mandatory one (1) hour unpaid lunch break per shift. Lunch will occur at the time designated by the employee's supervisor in order to allow for appropriate business coverage. Employees that leave the premises for an hour are expected to consume food while out. Employees may not return from a one hour lunch break with food and consume it.

Employees may be allowed a paid break period of fifteen (15) minutes for every four (4) hours worked, totaling two (2) breaks per day, **if the workload allows**. Breaks are discretionary, **not mandatory**, and will be used only when the workload accommodates. One break may be taken in the morning and another in the afternoon. Breaks may not be consolidated to make one thirty (30) minute break, nor may a break be added to the mandatory one (1) hour unpaid lunch break. If workload does not allow for the employee to take one or both of the breaks allowed during the employee's shift, the employee **may not** use the break to leave early, come in late, or receive flex time for not being able to take the break. Breaks may not be broken into any other combination, such as three (3) five (5) minute breaks in the morning and three (3) five (5) minute breaks afternoon.

The Sarpy County Attorney's Office will provide a designated location for lunch periods and breaks. Lunch shall not be taken at the employee's desk in order to avoid work related interruptions from other staff members not on lunch. If an employee wishes to consume a snack at their desk, the snack must be non-aromatic. Meals may not be eaten at an employee's desk at any time, this includes microwaveable meals, leftovers of any kind, salads and any other food emitting an aroma. Exceptions may be approved by a supervisor on special occasions such as office celebrations and potlucks.

Exempt Employees may take a lunch break and other break periods as their work duties and obligations allow. Employees may take those breaks away from the office while being mindful of essential tasks, schedules and deadlines that must be observed. Said breaks may also be taken in the employee's office out of view of the public. Every effort should be made to minimize disruption to the work of other staff members including avoiding overly aromatic food items and keeping the work surface and immediate surroundings clear of debris and clutter.

Cellular Phones/Head Phones/Ear Buds

Cellular phones, head phones and ear buds have become a common convenience to many employees. However, such conveniences should not interrupt work for the Sarpy County Attorney's Office. Head phones and ear buds are not to be used during regular working hours in order to maintain awareness and productivity. Cell phones shall be kept on silent or vibrate. Making personal calls and texting should be held to a minimum during regular working hours so not to cause a disruption to other employees or interrupt the working requirements of the employee's position.

Maintenance of Work Stations/Offices

All employees, both exempt and non-exempt, shall maintain their work stations/offices in a professional manner. Personal items may be placed on or in the work stations/offices so long as they do not interfere with staff work flow or detract from the functioning and professional dignity of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office. Maintaining work stations/offices promotes a positive image when other departments, attorneys and citizens visit the office. Sensitive and confidential paperwork should be placed in a location that does not compromise the privileged information contained in the files.

No Smoking Policy

In an effort to consider the needs and concerns of smokers and nonsmokers alike and to provide a healthful smoke-free working environment, Sarpy County has instituted the following policy pursuant to the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act: Smoking is prohibited throughout all County facilities and vehicles. All employees, customers and visitors are expected to comply with the no smoking regulations. Employees are not allowed to leave their designated work stations in order to take smoking breaks; however, employees are permitted to smoke during their mandatory lunch break and while on their discretionary breaks, workload permitting.

Dress Code/Employee Appearance

This is a professional office that represents the Sarpy County Attorney. Clothes are to be tasteful, pressed, in good repair, and fit properly. Employees are expected to present a professional, business-like image, and the following are considered inappropriate and should not be worn:

- * Athletic shoes, tennis shoes, flip-flops, strappy sandals, slippers or any casual shoe with an open toe.
- * Sweatpants or exercise pants; shorts of any style or length; bib overalls; capri pants that are more than two inches above the ankle; leggings or any spandex or other form fitting pants except that tights may be worn with an appropriate dress or skirt.
- * Short or tight skirts; mini-skirts; skorts; sun dresses; beach dresses or spaghetti strap dresses; and skirts or dresses more than two inches above the knee.
- * Tank tops; midriff tops; shirts with potentially offensive words, terms, logos, pictures, cartoons or slogans; halter tops; tops with bare shoulders or plunging necklines; tops exposing the back; sweatshirts or t-shirts.
- * Hats are not appropriate in the office; however, head coverings that are required for religious purposes or to honor cultural tradition are allowed.

Non-exempt employees may dress in casual attire on Fridays, which includes wearing jeans as long as they are worn with nice blouses, knit/cotton shirts, vests, sweaters, blazers, etc. but not t-shirts/sweatshirts. Jeans may not be torn or frayed.

Exempt employees may dress in business casual attire on Fridays, which includes wearing khakis as long as they are worn with nice blouses, knit/cotton shirts, golf shirts, polos, vests, sweaters, blazers, etc. but not t-shirts/sweatshirts, so long as there are no court or meeting appearances required and such attire will not detract from the professional image of the Sarpy County Attorney's Office.

Clothing that reveals too much cleavage, back, chest, stomach or exposes underwear is not appropriate for a place of business. Torn, dirty, stained, faded, ripped or frayed clothing is unacceptable. Employees who violate this dress code may be sent home to change and will not be compensated for the travel time to and from home. If uncertain whether clothing is appropriate, it probably is not.

Fragrant Items

Understanding that some individuals may react to different products with widely varying degrees of severity, the following items (and items similar to the ones listed below) may not be applied/sprayed at the employees work station/office:

- Hair Spray
- Scented Spray Air Fresheners
- Cologne/Perfume
- Nail Polish/Nail Polish Remover
- Other Heavily Scented Products

Electronic Communications

Internet/Intranet/Email

In order to remain competitive and to better serve the taxpayers, Sarpy County continues to adopt and make use of communication and information exchange. Many County employees have access to one or more forms of electronic media and services including computers, e-mail, telephones, voice mails, fax machines, on-line services and the Internet.

The Sarpy County Attorney's Office encourages the use of these media and associated services as a way to make communication more efficient and effective. All employees should remember that all electronic media and services provided by Sarpy County are considered property of Sarpy County.

All communications and internet resources are monitored periodically to determine bandwidth needs and utilization. Employees are responsible for any and all activity initiated by their E-mail ID, user account or personal workstation. Each employee shall follow all rules and regulations of the **Sarpy County Policies and Procedures Manual**. Please refer to this manual for complete details.

Social Media Policy

Forms of social media may include, but are not limited to, Facebook.com, LinkedIn.com, MySpace.com, Twitter.com, personal websites and weblogs (blogs). Employees must exercise care when participating in social media, even when the communications are sent outside of the workplace on the employee's own time. The lines between personal and professional content are often blurred and the employee is accountable for everything they post to social media sites that in any way relate to or implicate the Sarpy County Attorney's Office.

The Sarpy County Attorney's Office will adopt guidelines for employee participation in social media and on-line communications and attach as an appendix to this handbook. Violations of this policy, after its adoption, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employee Safety

Employees must have a safe place in which to work and safe equipment to operate. Each individual employee is the most important factor in job safety. Each employee must act safely to protect the employee's life as well as co-worker's lives.

The prevention of accidents and injuries to employees, as well as, the general public, shall be part of every work activity. All levels of management will be held accountable to maintain a safe and healthy environment for all employees and to ensure that employees will adhere to all safety precautions and practices.

Each employee shall follow all rules and regulations of the Sarpy County Safety Manual. Please refer to this manual for complete details.

Office Closure – Adverse Weather

It shall be the policy of Sarpy County to keep its facilities and services available to the public during periods of county emergencies to the fullest extent possible that is compatible with the health, safety, and general welfare of the public and county personnel. In the event of any weather or other emergency condition that may develop the County Clerk may determine the need to have a two (2) hour late start for County offices due to extreme adverse weather conditions. In such instances the two (2) hour late start of the County offices shall be immediately placed on the County website, www.sarpy.com, and the media, both television and radio, no later than 5:15 a.m.

The Elected Official will designate the staff members required to work when the county is closed regardless of weather conditions. Designated managers will be responsible for maintaining and providing each division's adverse weather policies to employees. Each division shall have a policy indicating the designated personnel required to work for the following situations:

- 1) When the Courthouse has a two (2) hour delayed start;
- 2) When the Courthouse is closed, but the Courts remain open;
- 3) When the Courthouse is closed and the Courts are closed.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures

The Sarpy County Attorney's Office has Emergency Evacuation Procedures in place with the objective to provide a safe and secure environment for all employees and visitors in the event of an emergency, including but not limited to, fires, tornados, bomb threats and active shooters.

Red binders have been placed in each division with the emergency evacuation procedures including maps illustrating the evacuation points, safe rooms and shelter areas in the Courthouse and Annex Building. In order to become familiar with the procedures, employees will be provided training material annually to review. Each employee shall follow all rules and regulations of the Emergency Evacuation Procedures. Please refer to this manual for complete details.